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The PRESIDENT, after proposing the thanks of the meeting to the donors of the books to the library of the Society, called on Mr. Pritchard to read a paper *On Viti and its Inhabitants*. [The paper is inserted in the first volume of Memoirs.]

Dr. SEEMANN said he considered the paper they had heard was one of the most important that had been communicated to the Society, and he was able, from personal acquaintance with the island, to corroborate many of Mr. Pritchard's statements. A great many things connected with the inhabitants of the Fiji islands had only appeared to him in their true light since he arrived in England. For instance, the Andaman islanders shewed that in many particulars they are similar to the Fijians. The first account of the Andaman islanders was that given in "Sinbad the Sailor", which narrative, though generally regarded only as a fiction, contained many correct statements. The Andaman canoes were similar to those used by the Fijians, especially in the outrigger. Dr. Seemann remarked on the curious legends of the islanders, of which Mr. Pritchard had given an account, especially those relating to their own origin. It was interesting to notice that, in so many legends, the original progenitors of man were placed under or near sacred trees. It was a curious circumstance that, in these legendary cosmogonies, there was always a serpent, in which symbol he considered there was a deep meaning. The supreme god of Fiji (Degei) had the shape of a serpent. The Fiji islanders appear to have possessed the knowledge of the process of printing on cloth made from the bark of the paper mulberry-tree, and they might have communicated their thoughts by printing. This would not have been difficult if reduced to the simplest form. The Peruvians, for instance, communicated their ideas by a system of knots, and the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands adopted a similar system. If ideas were reduced to a series of dots such dots might be readily printed.

Mr. REDDIE observed that the traditions of these islanders were very remarkable, and he considered it extraordinary that the people should be able to preserve them and repeat them to travellers. Such a preservation of our Christian legends could not be expected even in London among the common people. As to the frequent occurrence of the serpent in those legends, it was a very curious fact. They were going to hear a paper from Mr. Bollaert about the astronomy of the red man, and it was most likely they would hear from him something more about serpents. In the constellations of the heavens, which had been traced to the most ancient peoples on the face of the earth, the serpent was one of the most common emblems, and was to be found in several parts of both hemispheres of the celestial globe. It was interesting to find also the same symbols conspicuous among the legends of the inhabitants of the Fiji islands, and it appeared they had a common ancient origin. Such beautiful traditions could not be inventions of the present Fijians. Even in civilised London, not one out of ten would be capable of inventing such beautiful stories. The question was, whether they were not traditions of a people superior to those who now inhabited those islands, thus showing that the present inhabitants had deteriorated. The invention of

such legends, in more ancient times, at all events tended to prove that their inventors must have been greatly superior to improved baboons. It would be interesting to know something of the present literary qualifications of the people, and how far such traditions are retained among the inhabitants generally.

Mr. CONRAD COX enquired whether the word *snipe*, which occurred so often in the legends, had any other meaning than that of the bird, to account for its frequent introduction.

The PRESIDENT desired to add his testimony to the great value of the paper. Mr. Pritchard had lived among the people of those islands fifteen years, and the amount of original information he had communicated respecting them, especially their legends, was extremely interesting. As to the original distinctions of the races, that was merely a surmise. He should like to know on what evidence Mr. Pritchard founded the opinion that they were mixed races: and he wished to know also the numbers of the people. The most important part of the paper, he considered, was that about the migrations of the inhabitants. It was stated that several tribes had been blown away from one part of the Pacific to another. It would be important to know whether those statements were founded on historical facts or on traditions only. The discussion on the paper had not been so long as the matter deserved, but the paper would shortly be printed and placed in the hands of the Fellows, when the facts and traditions would be read at leisure, and would add exceedingly to their knowledge of the subject. The account of the migrations of these people threw more light on the early migrations of man than had been thrown on it by any communication ever before presented to a scientific Society.

Dr. SEEMANN made some observations on the storing up of local traditions among the people of this country, and observed that a great deal of curious information might be collected by those who chose to make it their business to do so.

Mr. ROBERTS said there was a little geology mixed up with this subject, on which he would make a few remarks. There was scarcely any doubt that formerly there was a large continent in the Pacific, and that the numerous groups of islands there are the remains of that submerged land, projecting above the level of the ocean. It was possible, therefore, that the people now inhabiting those islands retained the recollection of the legends of those who occupied that continent. The physical character of some of the islands confirmed the opinion that they constituted portions of a submerged land. The largest of them, for example, was encircled entirely by mountains, which would not have been the case had it been raised from the sea, and could only be accounted for on the supposition that it constituted the higher portion of the mountainous region of a submerged continent. The most natural interpretation of the legends of these people was, that they have clung to the old legends prevalent among the people of that continent.

Sir W. LOGAN, having been called on by the President, said he was not able to form an opinion on the interesting facts communicated

in the paper; the subject was new to him, and he felt much gratified with the instruction he had received.

Mr. PRITCHARD then replied to the questions and observations of the previous speakers. With respect to the remarks of Dr. Seemann, regarding printing, he said the kind of printing the Dr. referred to is the printing of patterns *on the native cloth*, and not letter printing. The inhabitants had no written language, but communicated with each other by means of sticks. Thus, when a chief sends a message to another chief, he gives a separate stick to the messenger for every idea of which the message is composed. The messenger, when he arrives in the presence of the chief to whom he is sent, delivers each stick separately, and mentions the idea or sentiment connected with each, until the whole are delivered. As to the date of the traditions, there can be no doubt of their antiquity. Different natives, without the possibility of collusion, narrate the same traditions in almost the same words. The missionaries discountenance the old traditions, and also any new stories. It is not easy to collect these traditions from the inhabitants, for it is necessary to be master of the language to do so, and those who are not thoroughly acquainted with it sometimes are imposed on, especially by runaway sailors, who know the language very imperfectly, and invent strange stories, which they represent to have heard from the natives. To learn their legends and traditions correctly, it is necessary to live amongst the natives, as he had done; and to gain an influence over the native mind, it is necessary to learn their mode of reasoning when certain data are placed before them. With respect to the snipe, its name in the respective groups has *strictly* no other signification than the bird, though sometimes it might imply only the *noise* made by the bird. The natives have decidedly the impression that they were originally separate races, and that there was a time when there was no intermixture of Samoans, Tongans, and Fijians. The evidence of intermixture is strongest on the east of Fiji. When the natives go out in their canoes, they take cocoa nuts with them for food; and they are very expert in catching sharks, which they eat. It is the practice of the men when blown to sea in their canoe, if they observe a shark (and they are numerous in those regions), for one of them to hold his naked leg in the water to tempt the shark to bite, taking good care to snatch the leg away in time. After this trick has been played several times the fish becomes angry, and snatches at anything thrown to him. They then entice him near the canoe by throwing over a cocoa nut, and contrive, as he snaps at it, to put a noose over his head, by which they drag him into the canoe. The natives thus contrive to live at sea for several weeks. The accounts of the former migrations are historical, so far as they form the literature of the islanders, who look on them as facts which occurred many years ago. The later migrations are known to all the natives, and there are many more than those mentioned in the paper. With regard to the geological question raised by Mr. Roberts, it is opposed to the fact that new islands have been thrown up from the ocean in this region. He himself knew an island that had been raised where, only a short time before, the

sea had been sounded without finding bottom. The reef is about three miles in circumference, and the island about thirty feet high, and a quarter of a mile long; and it is volcanic. The natives mention one that was partially submerged. In close proximity are two active volcanos. The islands are, in fact, increasing in some places and diminishing in others, by the united action of the sea and volcanic agency.

The PRESIDENT proposed the thanks of the meeting to Dr. Seemann, who had been the means of inducing Mr. Pritchard to contribute the valuable paper they had heard, to come there to read it, and to answer the questions which had been put to him. The next paper, by Mr. Bollaert, *On the Astronomy of the New World*, was very elaborate, so much so, indeed, that it could not have been read entire in one evening; the author would, therefore, merely indicate the contents; and the paper itself would appear in the next number of the Society's *Memoirs*.

Mr. BOLLAERT gave a sketch of the paper, and exhibited various drawings in illustration of it. [Mr. Bollaert's paper is inserted in the first volume of *Memoirs*.]

The PRESIDENT observed that the discussion of the subject had better be deferred until the *Memoirs* containing it were published; and a fitting opportunity would soon occur, for some other papers bearing on the subject would be read at no distant date. He then called on Mr. Collingwood to read the following paper, communicated by Dr. Barnard Davis:—*The Neanderthal Skull: its Formation considered Anatomically*. [Inserted in the first volume of *Memoirs*.]

Mr. C. CARTER BLAKE said he felt considerable diffidence in speaking on the subject once more, since, on the 16th of February last, he laid before a meeting of the Society the evidence then possessed respecting the characteristics and probable antiquity of the Neanderthal skull. He begged to call to mind that he then stated the several theories that had been propounded. One of those theories, advocated by Professor Huxley, was that it resembled the skulls of existing Australians. Another theory was, that the skull represented a distinct species—Professor King said, a distinct genus of mankind. In the opinion of Dr. Pruner Bey, it was merely the skull of a powerfully organised Celt, somewhat resembling the skull of a modern Irishman with low mental organisation. An anonymous writer in the *Medical Times and Gazette*, to whom they were indebted for a most satisfactory theory, expressed the opinion that it was the skull of an individual who had been affected with idiocy and rickets. They had also had more theories since he had the honour to read his paper in February. Dr. Gibb, in a paper read during the last session, suggested that the thickening of the skull was compatible with the theory that the individual was an example of hypertrophic deformation. Professor Mayer of Bonn, in a recent excellent Memoir, took a very different view of the origin of the skull, and instead of ascribing to it great antiquity, conceived that the Neanderthal skull, which had been found in a cave, covered with two feet of mud, was possibly that of one of the Cossacks who came from Russia in 1814. The last